The quality issues at departmental level at a recently merged university

P. J. Mentz
North West University
Potchefstroom, South Africa
soojjm@puknet.puk.ac.za

K. Mentz
North West University
Potchefstroom, South Africa
soopjm@puknet.puk.ac.za

Abstract

Quality assurance is an important subject in modern universities. After discussing several theoretical aspects of quality and quality assurance, the authors conclude that the care taken by heads of academic departments or directors of academic schools in the process of quality assurance may be regarded as one of the key elements of ensuring good quality in an institute of higher education. In order to gain more insight into this aspect of life at an institution of higher education, an empirical survey was done among a number of heads of academic departments/directors of academic schools at a university that was recently formed as a result of a merger between a historically white university and a historically black university. It was found that, because of various historical and organisational culture differences between the two campuses of the new university, there were several differences in managers’ approaches to quality and quality assurance, and that it will probably take a considerable time for quality assurance processes to take final shape at the new university.

1 INTRODUCTION

According to Barkley and Jeffries (2003), there is a strong need in the modern university for recognition and respect for diverse models of quality that bring disparate elements together. They found that large, complex dual-sector universities in Australia, for instance, were confronted by challenges of managing diverse understandings and expectations about quality, both internally and externally. The University of Tampere (2004) in Finland, for instance, was confronted by the issue of quality assurance at departmental level and came to the conclusion that quality assurance should result in a change in the culture and atmosphere, as well as in the administration of its academic departments. It further concluded that faculties’ and departments’ teaching and learning quality systems
should be seen as a key element in a university’s quality assurance programme. In fact, quality assurance at the departmental level was seen as the most challenging and formidable task that the university had to deal with.

Smith and Robinson (1999) proposed that quality assurance at departmental level should be treated as the fourth stage in a university’s ‘commitment cycle’, a cycle that begins in the vice-chancellor’s office. In the staff policy document of the former Potchefstroom University, quality assurance was also regarded as one of the key responsibilities of a school director (head of an academic department). In January 2004, this university and the former University of the North West merged to form the new multi-campus North West University. The new university features all of the characteristics of a complex dual-sector university, as described by Barkley and Jeffries (2003). The new university comprises two main campuses (apart from two other smaller ones), one historically white and the other historically black.

The study that was conducted at the newly merged university was aimed at determining the expectations of the directors/heads of department regarding the problem of quality assurance. Most of these directors/heads of department were also in the same management positions at the two former universities. Answers to the following two questions were sought: (1) How do the directors/heads of department perceive the role of quality assurance in the merged university? (2) What are the new issues and processes pertaining to quality assurance in the merged institution, and how do they differ from the issues and processes at (either of) the two former universities?

To find answers to the research questions, a research instrument was developed for distribution among a sample of directors/departmental heads at the merged university. A conceptual and theoretical framework was developed as the basis for the research instrument, the outlines of which are presented in the following section.

2 CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

2.1 The need for quality assurance

In these days higher education institutions are facing many challenges, such as globalisation, massification, e-learning, internalisation, strategic alliances and partnerships with the community and industry, as well as a changing funding base (Barkley and Jeffries 2003, 66; Singh 2000, 5; Fourie 2000, 50; Van der Westhuizen 2002, 70). These are the challenges for better performance and, therefore, necessitate the application of diverse quality models. While there are many different quality models, the differences between them should be recognised and respected. An encompassing vision of quality should also be developed, which
will bring contrasting elements together. It should also be kept in mind that institutions apply different evaluation or appraisal systems according to their specific purpose in the higher education system (cf. Quinn and McKellar 2002, 74).

Increasing links with industry, greater competition locally and globally, increasing marketisation and greater expectations of accountability all fuel the quest for quality (Castells 1998, 1–4; Barkley and Jeffries 2003, 68). The improved technology and new hierarchical structures in the workplace have also brought new challenges for workers; higher education institutions are expected to enable students to deal with the new challenges when they enter into the working arena (Singh 2000, 5). Appraisal of performance has further become necessary, since governments also expect greater accountability from higher education institutions, as governments became more concerned about how their money was being spent (Quinn and McKellar 2002, 73; Fourie 2000, 50; Van der Westhuizen 2002, 70).

In South Africa, the eradication of the fruits of the apartheid past places further demands on higher education institutions (Singh 2000, 5–6), such as:

- The removal of indirect discrimination in the structures, infrastructure, admission criteria, resource allocations and physical environments of higher education institutions;
- The eradication of discrimination and neglect that caused a lack of intelligence, creativity and potential in the majority of South Africans;
- The removal of pedagogy traditions from the past that did not encourage the development of strong independent-minded creative people; and
- Combating the lower expectations of black people that influenced the performance of higher education institutions and that impaired the quality of their service.

For all the above-mentioned reasons, higher education institutions in South Africa need ‘an entirely new attempt at self-examination, criticism, and self-evaluation’ (Singh 2000, 6). Higher education should be reformed so that the lofty goals formulated in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) can be reached. The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) is the author and watchdog of the NQF. The regulations of the Education and Training Quality Assurance Act compel higher education institutions to have a quality management system in place, including policies, procedures, and to review mechanisms for quality assurance (Fourie 2000, 50). While the policy requirements provide guidelines for quality assurance, it leaves most of the initiative to the institutions of higher education to develop their own quality assurance measures (Van der Westhuizen 2000, 56; Letuka 2000, 112).

2.2 Conceptual framework

Quality refers to one or more of the following (Harvey and Green 1993):
• Quality as exceptional – as something distinctive, excellent and special;
• Quality as perfection or consistency – conformance to specifications and standards as well as the prevention of faults;
• Quality as fitness for purpose – quality is seen as related to fulfilling a customer’s requirements, needs or desires;
• Quality as value for money – quality in terms of return on investment;
• Quality as transformation – the development and empowerment of students.

Taking all these meanings of quality together, a quality management system can be defined as ‘a system designed to manage the continuous improvement of all processes in an organisation in order to meet the expectations of the participants in the system and/or of those who stand to benefit from its services’ (Fourie 2000, 51).

Fourie (2000, 50) emphasises the recent tendency to shift attention from quality control to quality assurance, and points out that, in terms of quality assurance, institutions are required to establish their own quality management systems. Each institution now bears the responsibility for the improvement and maintaining of its own performance. In order to bring the responsibility of quality assurance as close as possible to the institution of higher education, a sub-unit providing the required educational services and quality management systems should be established at all institutional levels, including the departments, faculties and schools. Such systems would then be implemented by the various heads of departments, since they are closer to the lowest levels to be able to continuously evaluate and improve programmes, research, academic staff, and access (Fourie 2000, 54).

In the teaching and learning quality assurance process at the University of Tampere (2004, 6), each faculty and department sets its own goals, decides on the quality criteria by which it would measure success in achieving goals, and analyses its own teaching and learning activities in relation to the faculty and degrees offered. This demonstrates how the responsibility for quality assurance can be placed with the head of department.

Striving towards quality implies maintaining and applying academic and educational standards (Letuka 2000, 112). A quality assurance system should be aimed at (Newton 2000, 76; Quinn and McKellar 2002, 79):

• satisfying external accountability requirements for robust quality assurance arrangements;
• satisfying internal requirements for procedures that will withstand internal and external scrutiny, and
• facilitating quality development and improvement of staff and students.

The University of Tampere (2004, 3) explains the functioning of its quality assurance project by means of the following diagram:
The quality issues at departmental level at a recently merged university

The development of quality teaching, changes in the organisational culture to effect a commitment to excellence, and the adjustment of administration to accommodate these aims, go hand in hand; all three should be included in the quality assurance plan to achieve the set goals.

2.3 Design and development of a quality assurance system

When setting out to design a quality assurance system for the institution, a situation analysis should first be carried out to determine which quality assurance or self-evaluation measures exist on the different institutional levels (Alt 2000, 94). In this way, quality assurance gaps can be identified and remedied by designing a process that will facilitate the realisation of self-evaluation goals.

The unique properties and characteristics of an institution, including its problems and successes, are the factors that will influence the design of an appraisal system. Factors such as the range and complexity of the evaluative unit, the extent of self-knowledge, the availability of information, the availability of co-workers and available time should all be taken into account when drawing up the system (Alt 2000, 99).

Four key elements of a quality assurance system are discussed by Newton (2000, 76). These elements are philosophy, technology, context and alignment. The first three elements should all be aligned to work together for effective quality management (and are, therefore, not discussed separately):

2.3.1 Philosophy and culture of the organisation

*Philosophy* is defined by (Newton 2000, 76) as the shared values and ideals which inform the approach to quality. To ensure effective quality assurance, the philosophy and culture of the organisation should be characterised by the following:

- A quality philosophy incorporated in the organisational culture should be the foundation of the quality assurance system. An open and active commitment
towards quality should be cultured at all institutional levels. Educators should be enthusiastic and committed to rendering a quality service towards students.

- The culture should further be characterised by a willingness to engage in self-evaluation. Educators should be self-reflective, self-critical and continuously analyse their academic activities in order to identify areas for improvement and development.
- A definite framework should be erected to regulate evaluation and development. Procedures should be clear and consistent, and explicit responsibility should be handed down for quality control and assurance.
- Communication and liaison is imperative for obtaining feedback and identifying, and spreading good practice.
- Management should act promptly, but with the necessary sensitivity and in an appropriate manner to redress problems.

2.3.2 Technology

Technology, as an element of a quality assurance system, refers to the components of such a system which entails the processes and procedures for quality assurance (Newton 2000, 77). Processes important to the quality manager are: validation and review of programmes; annual monitoring, making amendments to programmes; preparation for external quality assessment; and student feedback.

Technical procedures include the design of a programme; the inputs to the programme; the programme process; and programme outcomes.

2.3.3 Context

Quality management requires that contextual realities be taken into account. Newton (2000, 75–76) discusses the following factors that affect policy implementation and the managing of change relating to quality assurance:

- **Cultural and organisational context:** The size, stage of development, strategic priorities, blend of organisational politics, and the particular vulnerabilities of an institution should be considered when implementing a quality assurance policy. These factors make up the context and set the background against which the appraisal system will be managed, and might also be strongly influenced by it. Organisational culture entails many variables that influence change. The manager (in this case, the head of department/director) needs to take this into consideration when implementing a quality assurance programme, and should use the organisational culture to positively influence the reaching of goals (Newton 2000, 76).
- **Unpredictability:** Higher education institutions are complex mixes of unique values, structures and functions. These institutions are dynamic and non-static, and are influenced by a variety of factors.
In his or her attempt to implement change, the manager (head of department/director) is constrained by various factors from both the internal and external environment. Unexpected outcomes may emerge as circumstances change, and the manager should be prepared to adapt to, and incorporate them, in the quality assurance system as they arise (Newton 2000, 76).

The manager should, therefore, consider current as well as emerging climactic characteristics of the department or institution. The expectations of staff as well as external stakeholders and regulatory bodies should be taken into account when designing and implementing appraisal systems (Newton 2000, 77). The manager should be able to assess the context and adapt his or her quality management strategy accordingly.

2.3.4 Self-evaluation as quality assurance procedure

Self-evaluation of staff and programmes may be incorporated into the quality assurance system as procedures to identify weaknesses and problem areas so that they may be addressed and rectified.

2.3.5 Criteria used to assess progress towards better quality

The South African Excellence model proposes the use of Enablers criteria and Results criteria for the assessment of an institution’s progress towards excellence (Brunyee 2000, 180–181).

**Enablers criteria**

Enablers criteria are used to assess how effective the institution is managed and how well things are done, and to evaluate methods used to achieve results. These criteria include the following (Brunyee 2000, 181):

- **The leadership** should enable the institution to reach its quality goals. The behaviour of the executive team should inspire, support, and promote a culture of institutional excellence;
- **The institutional policy and strategy** should be directed at achieving excellence. Here, it is important that the policy and strategy be mobilised into plans and action;
- **A customer and market focus** should be kept, referring to how requirements are determined and expectations enhanced;
- **People management** should be employed in a way that brings employees to their full potential;
- **Resource and information management** must be carried out to efficiently and effectively improve quality, and
- **Processes** should be identified, managed, reviewed and improved on a continuous basis.
These criteria should be used in self-evaluation by giving a score for each, based on approach and deployment. Brunyee (2000, 181) suggests asking questions such as: ‘How good is the approach?’ and ‘How widely is it in use?’

**Results criteria**

Results criteria are used to evaluate the achievements of the institution as per set targets and to determine how these results measure up against those of other institutions. These criteria include the following (Brunyee 2000, 181):

- **The impact on society** is measured in terms of how the institution satisfies the needs and expectations of its local, national and international community;
- **Customer satisfaction** – the extent to which the institution succeeds in meeting the needs of its external customers;
- **People satisfaction**, referring to the satisfaction levels of the people in the institution;
- **Supplier and partnership performance** is measured by evaluating the management of supplier and partnering processes;
- **Institution performance results** are measured in terms of the reaching of planned operating objectives and satisfying the needs and expectations of everyone with a financial interest or other stake in the institution.

These results are assessed, the scope addressed and also compared to the performance of other institutions to stretch performance (Brunyee 2000, 181).

### 2.4 Educator performance appraisal

Quinn and McKellar (2002, 74) define developmental performance appraisal as ‘a formative, developmental, negotiated, continuous and systematic process intended to help individual teachers with their professional development and career planning’.

Such appraisal is aimed at the development of personnel, and to assist them to improve their own performance in order to ensure better quality. This entails that individuals are evaluated in a dialogic process set in an atmosphere of trust and confidentiality between appraiser and appraisee (Quinn and McKellar 2002, 74). Strengths as well as areas where the educator/lecturer may improve are identified, and assistance should be given for the educator to develop the strengths and to improve where needed. This approach is preferred to an accountability model that might evoke defensiveness and hiding of weaknesses.

When implementing this model, the appraiser (usually the head of department or director) should first create an atmosphere of trust and respect to facilitate open and honest communication between him- or herself and the appraisees. He or she should further help participants to understand the purpose of performance appraisal (Quinn and McKellar 2002, 76). Lecturers need to understand that the evaluation
of their performance is aimed at improving their performance, thereby improving quality of teaching. For performance appraisal to succeed, the processes involved should encourage openness and better colleagueship (Quinn and McKellar 2002, 79).

2.5 Evaluation of programmes and performance

**Evaluation of quality** is defined by the University of South Australia (2002, 2) as follows:

- The systematic consideration of stakeholder views and benchmarking activities about the quality of programmes and the courses that comprise them; and
- The aggregation, analysis and interpretation of students’ feedback about their perceptions of the quality of their courses of study to inform judgments about quality of programmes that incorporate those courses.

Evaluation is directed towards discovering whether there is room for improvement. In other words, to find out whether higher education institutions can reach their goals more efficiently and more effectively (Smith and Robinson 2002, 2). The outcomes of institutional research and the feedback of students should be actively and consciously applied in order to implement new and better ways of delivering the service that the institution provides. The information gathered from evaluation should not be merely observed, but used to bring about change.

Procedures used by the University of Australia (2002, 2–5) include:

- **Course evaluation**: Each course is evaluated in one or another form each time it is presented. Measures used may include evaluation of a component of the course, assessment requirements, dedicated support services or facilities, stakeholder input such as peer review, as well as the use of a course evaluation instrument.
- **Programme evaluation reporting**: Programme evaluation is reported according to set pro forma’s which provide the framework for the systematic evaluation of programmes. The performance of programmes is monitored to ensure that they meet certain criteria.
- **Evaluation of quality**: After gathering data from stakeholders and student evaluation programmes, directors establish mechanisms for analysing the responses.
- **Consideration of quality**: Report is given of performance, action plans are drawn up, and changes are made according to recommendations.
- **Evaluation of viability**: The viability of programmes is evaluated according to viability indicators, and ranked accordingly.
3  THE EMPIRICAL SURVEY

3.1 Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) as an instrument of quality assurance

Smith and Robinson (2002, 1–2) discuss a Course Experience Questionnaire (i.e., a quality survey sent to all graduates early in the year following their graduation) as a performance indicator of the quality of courses in Australia, and point out the following disadvantages of the instrument:

- The questionnaire expects of students to evaluate the entire course, which may lead to students either not bringing extreme experiences into account, or to their response being influenced by one or a few strong experiences, be they positive or negative; and
- When evaluating an entire course, students tend to give one evaluation for three or more years, which may mean that some of the experiences they had at the start of their course may not even live in their memory any more.

The data collected by means of a CEQ may therefore be invalid, and also do not take into account the differences between the character and composition of different schools and departments (Smith and Robinson 2002, 2). The CEQ, as an instrument for attaining quality assurance may, however, be helpful in gaining insight into the quality of courses if higher education institutions can overcome these flaws and shortcomings.

In the process of developing the questionnaire applied in this study, the following theoretical constructs, most of which were addressed in the conceptual and theoretical framework above, were taken into account:

- Recognition and respect for diverse models
- Links between industry and university
- Increasing marketisation
- Expectations of accountability
- The department’s or school’s responsibility for quality assurance
- Change in culture and atmosphere in merged universities
- Administrative issues regarding quality assurance
- Resistance to change
- Quality criteria and the role of the department
- The individual’s responsibility regarding quality assurance

3.2 Implementing the instrument

Directors and heads of departments in three faculties at the former Potchefstroom University (n = 12) and 2 faculties at the former University of the North West (n = 7) were requested to complete the questionnaire. The instrument was a Likert-
type 20-item questionnaire (see below). After having completed the questionnaire, respondents were asked to comment on any aspect of the questionnaire. Here is the questionnaire submitted to them:

4 QUESTIONNAIRE: QUALITY ASSURANCE AT SCHOOL/DEPARTMENTAL LEVEL AT THE NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY

Dear Colleague

I am conducting an investigation about the perception of academic directors and heads of departments at the North-West University regarding quality assurance at departmental/school level. I kindly request you to assist me by completing this short questionnaire. I will collect the completed questionnaire at your office at an agreed time.

Thank you!

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

Please indicate your answer with an X in the applicable block

A1. I am a director/head of department at:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mafikeng campus</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Potchefstroom campus</td>
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A2. Number of years of experience as a director/head of department

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<th>Years</th>
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<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>6-10</td>
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<td>10+</td>
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B. QUALITY ASSURANCE QUESTIONNAIRE

Indicate with an X on a scale from 1–4, to which extent you agree or disagree with the statements made

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>X</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Disagree to an extent</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Agree to an extent</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Statement</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>An encompassing vision of quality for the North-West University (NWU) is needed</td>
</tr>
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<td>B2</td>
<td>Quality assurance systems at the two former universities (at Mafikeng and Potchefstroom) should serve as the framework for the quality approach at the new NWU</td>
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<td>B3</td>
<td>Increasing marketisation should be the driving force behind quality processes at the NWU</td>
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<tr>
<td>B4</td>
<td>Greater expectations of accountability should be the driving force behind quality processes at the NWU</td>
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<tr>
<td>B5</td>
<td>Greater competition locally and globally should be the driving force behind quality processes at the NWU</td>
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<tr>
<td>B6</td>
<td>Quality assurance is the systematic consideration of stakeholder views</td>
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<td>B7</td>
<td>A quality assurance programme at the NWU should include benchmarking activities about the quality of programmes and the courses that comprise them</td>
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<tr>
<td>B8</td>
<td>Students’ feedback should form an integral part of a quality assurance programme at the NWU</td>
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<tr>
<td>B9</td>
<td>The final creation of the quality assurance system at the NWU is the responsibility of the schools/departments</td>
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<td>B10</td>
<td>External evaluation of the quality processes at the NWU should be conducted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B11</td>
<td>The school/department is the focal point in any quality assurance process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B12</td>
<td>A change in culture and atmosphere at the school/departmental level is a prerequisite for a successful quality assurance system at the NWU</td>
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<tr>
<td>B13</td>
<td>Administrative changes are needed at the NWU to support the implementation of a quality assurance process</td>
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</table>
The quality issues at departmental level at a recently merged university

B14 Quality systems borrowed from business/enterprise could serve as a framework for a quality system at the NWU

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B15 Schools/departments at the NWU should create quality assurance systems of their own, in keeping with their own profiles and cultures

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B16 The quality assurance system at the NWU should be the sum of all those parts occurring in the schools/departments

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B17 Schools/departments in the NWU should decide on the quality criteria by means of which to measure success in achieving goals

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B18 An individual in every school/department should be made responsible for coordinating quality assurance activities in the school/department

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B19 Implementing a quality assurance process at school/departmental level at the NWU will be burdensome and costly

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B20 It is possible to implement a comprehensive quality assurance system for the NWU

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If you wish, please write any comment regarding quality assurance at school/departmental level at the NWU in the space below.

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Your cooperation in assisting me with this investigation is appreciated.

4.1 Results

Mean scores for the two campuses

The mean scores for the two campuses were as follows (max. = 4):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>P-campus *</th>
<th>M-campus **</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>3.28</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>P-campus *</td>
<td>M-campus **</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>3.28</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>3.71</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>3.71</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.28</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* P-campus Potchefstroom campus
** M-campus Mafikeng campus

**Discussion**

At the P-campus, the highest mean scores were obtained for questions 1 and 10, dealing with the need for an encompassing vision of quality and the need for external evaluation of quality.

At the M-campus, the highest mean scores were obtained for questions 4, 6 and 8, dealing with accountability and involving all stakeholders (including students) when ensuring quality.

**Differences between the two campuses**

The $d$-value was calculated to determine the effect size of the differences between the two campuses for all the questions. The following $d$-values larger than 0.5 were found:
The quality issues at departmental level at a recently merged university

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>d-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.17</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.73</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.95</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

The M-campus respondents felt significantly stronger than the P-campus respondents about involving all stakeholders when implementing a quality assurance programme (question 6).

The P-campus respondents held the view that external evaluation of the quality processes at the merged university should be conducted, while the issue was not important to the M-campus respondents (question 10).

While the P-campus respondents viewed the school/department as the focal point in any quality assurance process, this was not as important to the M-campus respondents (question 11).

The M-campus respondents felt stronger than the P-campus respondents about the fact that a change in culture and atmosphere was needed to implement a successful quality assurance system at the merged university (question 12).

The M-campus respondents held the view that quality systems borrowed from business and enterprise could serve as a framework for a quality assurance system at the merged university. This was not as important to the P-campus respondents (question 14).

The M-campus respondents viewed the quality assurance system at the merged university as the sum of all those parts occurring in the schools/departments, while this was not as important to the P-campus respondents (question 16).

Open-ended question

Not many respondents used the opportunity to complete the open-ended question. The responses of those who commented, corresponded with the differences between the respondents attached to the two campuses found above.

5 CONCLUSION

The merged university needs to deal with several issues before an effective quality assurance system can be implemented. There are notable differences between the views of directors/heads of departments at the two campuses. While the Mafikeng...
campus respondents emphasised the role and input of all stakeholders in setting up
a quality assurance system, the Potchefstroom campus respondents did not regard
this as an important issue. There was also a difference in the perceptions of
respondents regarding major quality assurance issues. In the past, the Potchefst-
room campus was a large autonomous university, with the majority of the students
and staff being white. The Mafikeng campus, on the other hand, was a small
university with the majority of students and staff being black. Given the difference
in educational background of students and the political situation at (former) black
universities before 1994, it is clear that setting up a uniform quality assurance
system for the merged university will not be an easy task. Not only has the survey
revealed deep-seated differences between the approaches of the heads of
department/school directors at the two campuses, but the theoretical study has
also brought to light that there are many facets and aspects of quality assurance that
have not yet been discussed in the context of the newly formed university. It can
also be expected that, as the university grows and develops its own new
institutional culture, a number of imponderables will emerge and that will also
have to be taken into account during the measuring, controlling and planning for
quality assurance.

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